



AIATSIS

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL
AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES

Family History Unit

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Sources – mission and reserve records

Missions, reserves and stations were reserves of land to which Aboriginal people were forcibly relocated.

- **Missions** were in the control of churches and missionaries with little or no government involvement.
- **Reserves and stations** were generally run by the government, although churches, especially the United Aborigines Mission and the Aborigines Inland Mission, were sometimes active on government settlements although they didn't always have an administrative role. Aboriginal reserves were overseen by government 'protectors', who controlled many aspects of the lives of Aboriginal people.

The types of records that remain vary. They might include diaries, daily occurrence books, photographs taken by visitors and resident missionaries, letters between church officials and people working on the church settlements, and registers of Aboriginal children and adults living there. Some missionaries recorded local languages and culture, and described daily life. Churches also published magazines and newspapers that included information about missions and church institutions.

Mission and reserve records can best be described as patchy. Of the many Aboriginal missions and reserves that were established, some still exist but many have disappeared. Records that remain are usually held by the church or in state archives. Records relating to one mission may be split between church bodies and government bodies.

See AIATSIS subject guide: [How to find mission and reserve records](#) (has a comprehensive list of AIATSIS holdings on missions and reserves).

Find & Connect

The [Find & Connect](#) web resource includes a lot of information about missions where Aboriginal children lived. Find & Connect lists records relating to the missions, and who to contact to get access to the records. You can search or browse on their [Look for homes](#) page.

Search AIATSIS or National Library

A lot of research has been done into Aboriginal missions and reserves. You can read the histories of the particular mission or reserve where your family lived. Understanding the history of Aboriginal missions more generally, can help you understand what your family members' lives were like and might provide further clues. Most of mission/reserve histories will also list sources and locations of records.



Search the [AIATSIS Mura catalogue](#) or [Trove](#) using the mission name or the word 'mission' and the name of the relevant state.

What information do you need to look for mission records?

To start researching you need to know:

- the name of the person
- the name or at least the general location of the mission, reserve or station they lived on.

It's also helpful to know:

- other personal details such as dates and place of birth, marriage and death
- the name of the government or church body that managed the mission, reserve or station.

Where do you find the records?

Aboriginal records units in most states and territories can help you with locating mission and reserve records about you and your close family. These units are mostly within state government departments of Aboriginal affairs and specialise in locating personal records.

New South Wales Family Records Unit – Aboriginal Affairs

Level 13, Tower B, Centennial Plaza, 300 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010

Free call: 1800 019 998

Ph: 02 9219 0700

Fax: 02 9219 0790

Email: familyhistory@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/about/family-records-unit/

Northern Territory Archives Service

Northern Territory Archives Centre, Kelsey Crescent, Millner NT 0810

GPO Box 874, Darwin NT 0801

Ph: 08 8924 7677

Fax: 08 8924 7660

Email: ntac@nt.gov.au

Web: www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au/ntas (Northern Territory Archives Service)

www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au/ntas/research/protocol (Protocol for Aboriginal family history research)

www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au/ntas/media/pdf/ATSI-Family-History_Oct2012.pdf (Fact sheet on Aboriginal family history research)

Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships – Community and Personal Histories

Level 6A, Neville Bonner Building, 75 William Street, Brisbane QLD 4000

PO Box 15397, City East QLD 4002

Free call: 1800 650 230

Email: enquiries@datsip.qld.gov.au

Online form: www.qld.gov.au/atsi/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/family-history-request-form/index.html

Web: www.datsip.qld.gov.au/people-communities/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-family-history

State Records of South Australia – Aboriginal Access team

State Records Research Centre (in the State Library of South Australia building), Corner North Terrace and Kintore Avenue, Adelaide SA 5000

GPO Box 464, Adelaide SA 5001

Ph: 08 8204 8767 or 08 8204 8791

Fax: 08 8204 8777

Online form: www.archives.sa.gov.au/content/contact-us-form

Email: srsaAboriginalServices@sa.gov.au

Web: www.archives.sa.gov.au/content/aboriginal-services (Aboriginal services)

www.archives.sa.gov.au/content/family-history (Family history)

LINC Tasmania

2nd Floor, 91 Murray Street, Hobart TAS 7000

Ph: 03 6165 5538

Online form: <http://sltas.altarama.com/reft100.aspx?key=Research>

Web: www.linc.tas.gov.au/archive-heritage/guides-records/Pages/Aboriginal.aspx (Aboriginal family history)

www.linc.tas.gov.au

Public Record Office Victoria – Koorie Records Unit

Victorian Archives Centre, 99 Shiel Street, North Melbourne VIC 3051

PO Box 2100, North Melbourne VIC 3051

Free call: 1800 657 452

Ph: 03 9348 5735

Fax: 03 9348 5656

Email: koorie.records@prov.vic.gov.au

Online form: prov.altarama.com/reft100.aspx

Web: prov.vic.gov.au/community-programs/koorie-records-unit
prov.vic.gov.au/publications/finding-your-mob

Aboriginal History Research Unit – Department of Aboriginal Affairs

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs Aboriginal History Research Unit manages access to Western Australian state archives and some privately owned records. You can apply as a personal or family history applicants for your own records or those of your ancestors. You can apply for any records relating to you held by the department, or those relating to a specific purpose such as evidence of genealogy, dates and place of birth or a specific ancestor.

151 Royal Street, East Perth WA 6004

PO Box 3153, East Perth WA 6892

Free call: 1300 651 077

Fax: 08 6551 8088

Email: ahru@daa.wa.gov.au

Web: www.daa.wa.gov.au/community-development/ahru

Missions and reserves by state and territory

The state-by-state listings below give the names of many (but not all) of the church and government missions and reserves around Australia.

To find records by yourself, you will need to know the name of the mission or reserve, and then find out the name of the government or church body that managed it.

New South Wales – selected missions and reserves

(The abbreviations are explained in the section ‘Church names, missions and abbreviations’.)

Name of mission	Church	Period
Bomaderry	UAM	1908–88
Bowraville	RC	1923–?
Goulburn Inland Mission Station	MTH	1916–?
La Perouse	unknown	1895–?
Lake Macquarie (Ebenezer)	LMS	1824–41
Maloga Mission School	unknown	1874–94
Parramatta	CE	1820–28
Sydney Aboriginal Mission	unknown	unknown
Warangesda	CE / ABM	1879–1920
Wellington Valley	CMS	1832–42
Yelta	unknown	unknown

Source: *Lookin for Your Mob: A Guide to Tracing Aboriginal Family Trees*, by Diane Smith and Boronia Halstead, Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1990. Although this list is not complete, it includes the most relevant reserves and missions for family history research.

More information

- State Records NSW holds various records relating to reserves. See [State archives relating to Aboriginal people](#).
- Also see [Living on Aboriginal reserves and stations](#), a NSW Government Environment & Heritage website.

Victoria – selected missions and reserves

(The abbreviations are explained in the section ‘Church names, missions and abbreviations’.)

Name of mission	Church	Period
Buntingdale	WMS / MTH	1839–48
Coranderrk	GOVT	1863–1924
Framlingham	CE	1865–67
Framlingham	GOVT	1869–70
Goulburn Station	GOVT	1841–54
Lake Boga	MOR	1851–56
Lake Condah	CE	1867–1913
Lake Condah	GOVT	1913–18
Lake Hindmarsh (Ebenezer)	MOR / PRES	1858–1903
Lake Tyers	CE	1861–1908
Lake Tyers	GOVT	1908–70
Lake Wellington (Ramahyuck)	MOR / PRES	1862–1908
Merri Creek School	BAP	1845–51
Mount Franklyn Station	GOVT	1839–64
Mount Rouse Station	GOVT	1841–51
Narre Narre Warren Station	GOVT	1841–43
Yarra Mission	CMS	1837–39
Yelta	CE	1855–68

Source: *Lookin for Your Mob: A Guide to Tracing Aboriginal Family Trees*, by Diane Smith and Boronia Halstead, Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1990. Although this list is not complete, it includes the most relevant reserves and missions for family history research.

More information

- The [Mission voices](#) web site contains background information, stories, timelines and maps on Victorian missions and reserves.

Queensland – selected missions and reserves

Here we have listed missions visited by anthropologist Norman Tindale in the 1930s – see Tindale genealogies for more information.

(The abbreviations are explained in the section ‘Church names, missions and abbreviations’.)

Name of institution	Church	Period
Aurukun	MOR / PRES	1904–78
Bamaga	CE	1947–86
Bethesda	L	1866–89
Bloomfield River (Wujal Wujal)	L	1886–1902, 1957–87
Bowen	CMS	1878–1901
Cherbourg (Barambah)	CE	1904–86
Cowal Creek	CE	1915–87
Daintree River	AOG	1939–?
Doomadgee	BR	1932–83
Edward River	ABM	1935–67
Elim (<i>see Hopevale</i>)		
Fantome Island (Leper Station)	RC?	unknown
Fraser Island	ABM	1897–1904
Gorge Mission	AOG	unknown
Hopevale (Cape Bedford)	L	1886–1986
Kowanyama (Mitchell River)	ABM	1904–78
Lockhart River	ABM	1924–67
Mackay	MTH	1871–1901
Mapoon	MOR / PRES	1891–1987
Marie Yamba	L	1888–1902
Maryborough	CMS	unknown
Mona Mona	ADV	1913–?
Moreton Bay	L / PRES	1837–45
Moreton Bay	CMS	1837–46
Mornington Island	PRES	1914–78
Noangir (<i>see Moreton Bay</i>)		
Palm Island (St Michael's School)	RC	1931–86

Purga	SAL	1915–48
Somerset	SPG (CE)	1867–68
Stewards Creek	MTH	1885?–1901?
Stradbroke Island (Myora Mission)	RC	1843–47
Thursday Island	ABM	unknown
Thursday Island	LMS	1871–1915
Trubanaman (see <i>Kowanyama</i>)		
Weipa	MOR / PRES	1896–1966
Woorabinda	RC	1911–86
Yarrabah	ABM	1891–1960
Yungaburra	AOG	unknown
Zion Hill (see <i>Moreton Bay</i>)		

More information

The most thorough listing of Queensland missions is at the State Library of Queensland – see [Missions and reserves](#).

Western Australia – selected missions and reserves

(The abbreviations are explained in the section ‘Church names, missions and abbreviations’.)

Name of institution	Church	Period
Albany	RC	1845–48
Albany Boys Home	RC	unknown
Amy Bethel House	UAM	1956–75
Annesfield	unknown(Private)	1852–71?
Badjalang	UAM	1930–50?
Balgo Hills (Billiluna, Lake Gregory)	RC(P)	1931–80
Beagle Bay (West Kimberley)	RC(T/P)	1891–1976
Bennett House (previously East Perth Girl's Home)		
Boulder Working Youths Hostel	AAEMB	unknown
Broome Convent	RC	1908–?
Carrolup Native Settlement (Katanning)	GOVT	1915–22
Cundeelee	AAEMB	1950–?
Derby (Leper Station)	RC	1937–1987
Derby (Leper Station)	UAM	1930–75
Derby (Gibb River, Mowanjum, Pandanus)	RC	1940s–today
Disaster Bay	RC	1895?–1903
Drysdale River (see <i>Kalumburu</i>)		

Dulhi Gunyah Mission Home (Victoria Park)	UAM	1909–17
East Perth Girl's Home (later Bennett House)	GOVT	1931–?
Ellensbrook (Busselton)	GOVT	1899–1917
Esperance Mission Home	AAEMB	unknown
Fairhaven (Esperance)	CC	unknown
Fitzroy Crossing	UAM	1952–87
Forrest River (Kimberley)	CE / ABM	1913–71
Fremantle (<i>see Swan River</i>)		
Gascoyne	CE	1885–?
Gnowangerup	UAM	1926–73
Guildford	RC	1846–48
Halls Creek	UAM	1957–67
Halls Creek (Parochial Mission area)	RC	1961–today
Holy Child Orphanage (Broome –previously St John of God Home for Native Girls)	RC	1912–70
Jigalong (East Pilbara)	APC	1945–69
Kalgoorlie Girls Home	SAL	1909–30
Kalumburu (East Kimberley – previously Drysdale River)	RC(B)	1907–82
Karalundi	ADV	1954–?
Katanning	BAP	1952–?
Katukutu Home	BAP	unknown
Kellerberrin	BAP	1939–50?
Kunmunya (Kimberley – previously Port George IV)	PRES	1913–53
Kununurra	RC	1964–today
Kurrawang	BR	1952–?
Kyewong Home	BAP	unknown
La Grange (West Kimberley)	RC (PSM /P)	1924–85?
Lombadina (One Arm Point, Cygnet Point)	RC (PSM)	1911–85?
MacDonald House (Perth)	CE	unknown
Maria Goretti Home	RC	1960s
Marribank (<i>see Katanning</i>)		
Methodist Children's Home	MTH	unknown
Mogumber	MTH	1951–?
Moola Bulla (East Kimberley)	GOVT	1911–54
Moore River Native Settlement (Mogumber)	GOVT	1918–51
Mount Magnet	UAM	unknown

Mount Margaret (Goldfields)	UAM	1921–75
Mowanjum	PRES	1956–81
New Norcia (Victoria Plains)	RC (B)	1846–70
Norseman	CC	1942–?
Ocean View Home	RC	unknown
Pallotine Boys Hostel (Albany)	RC (P)	1968–78
Perth Native Institution	MTH	1840s
Port George IV (later called Kunmunyah)	PRES	1910–16
Range View Students Home	PRES	unknown
Rockhole (Balgo)	RC	1934–?
Roelands Native Mission Farm	INTER / CC	1938–today
Rossmoyne Training Centre	RC	1955–today
St John of God Home for Native Girls (Broome – later called Holy Child Orphanage)		
St Joseph's Home (near Derby)	RC	1961–today
Sister Kate's Home (Queens Park, Perth)	ANG	1933–50?
Smithies Mission (Perth)	WMS	1842–55
Sunday Island (Kimberley)	UAM / ABM	1898–1964
Swan Native and Half–Caste Home/Mission	ANG	1870–1921
Swan River	CE	1852–?
Tardun (Pallotine Mission School)	RC (P)	1948–today
Vasse Mission School	CE	unknown
Wandering (St Xavier Native Mission)	RC	1944–76
Waneroo (Perth)	MTH	1831–54
Warburton Ranges	UAM	1933–77
Warminda Girls Home	MTH	unknown
Wiluna	ADV	unknown
Wonguntha Mission Training Farm (Esperance)	INTER	1954–?
Wotjalum	PRES	1953–56
Wyndham	unknown	1959–today

More information

- The State Records Office of WA holds extensive records relating to missions which are listed in [Looking West: A Guide to Aboriginal Records in Western Australia \(pdf, 385kb\)](#). Also see their webpage about [Aboriginal records](#).
- Information on missions in Western Australia can also be found at [Signposts: A Guide for Children and Young People in Care in WA from 1920](#).

South Australia – selected missions and reserves

(The abbreviations are explained in the section ‘Church names, missions and abbreviations’.)

Name of institution	Church	Period
Adelaide Children's Home	ABM	unknown
Adelaide School	L	1839–48
Colebrook Home	UAM	1927–78
Davenport	BR	1937–65
Encounter Bay	L	1840–48
Ernabella	PRES / UC	1937–today
Finniss Springs	UAM	1939–65
Gerard	UAM	1925–61
Kadina	MOR	1865–?
Killalpaninna (<i>see Kopperamanna</i>)		
Koonibba	L	1901–63
Kopperamanna	L	1866–1917
Limbuana (<i>see Encounter Bay</i>)		
Manunka Aborigines Mission Home	unknown	1902?–06?
Mount Gambier	AFA	unknown
Nepabunna	UAM	1930–today
Oodnadatta	UAM	1924–?
Ooldea	UAM	1933–54
Point McLeay	AFA	1858–1916
Point Pearce	unknown	1868–1915
Poonindie	ABM	1850–75
PortLincoln	L	1840–45
St Francis House (Adelaide)	ABM	1949–57
Swan Reach (<i>see Gerard</i>)		
Umeewarra	BR	1937–65
Yalata	L	1954–75

More information

- The State Library of South Australia has prepared a research guide on [Aboriginal missions in South Australia](#).

Tasmania

- There were no church–run Aboriginal missions in Tasmania – see [Aboriginal missions](#) in the *Companion to Tasmanian History* for more information.

- Anthropologist Norman Tindale visited the Aboriginal communities on the reserve on Cape Barren Island in the 1930s – see Tindale genealogies.

Northern Territory – selected missions and reserves

(The abbreviations are explained in the section ‘Church names, missions and abbreviations’.)

Name of institution / mission	Church	Period
Alice Springs (Children's Home)	ABM	unknown
Alice Springs/Arltunga	RC	1937–42, 1942–54
Angurugu (Groote Eylandt)	CMS	1921–78
Areyonga	L	1942–55
Bagot Compound	AIM	unknown
Bamyill (Katherine)	AIM	1969–?
Baptist Home (Darwin)	BAP	1969–76?
Bathurst Island	RC(MSC)	1911–today
Belyuen (see Delissaville)		
Berrimah Leper Station (<i>see Channel Island</i>)		
Borrooloola	AIM	1951–today
Buckingham Bay (<i>see Elcho Island</i>)		
Channel Island (Leper Station)	RC	1930–43, 1955–82
Croker Island	MTH	1940–today
Daly River	RC(J/MSC)	1886–99, 1956–today
Dellssaville(Belyuen)	AIM	1946?–?
East Arm Settlement (Leper Station)	RC	1923–24
Elcho Island	MTH	1922–23, 1942–today
Elliot	UAM	unknown
Emerald River (Groote Eylandt)	CMS	1921–42
Finke River Mission House (Alice Springs)	L	?–today
Galiwinku (<i>see Elcho Island</i>)		
Garden Point	RC	1940–?
Goulburn Island	MTH	1915–today
Haast Bluff	L	1940–54
Hermannsburg	L	1877–1982
Kahlin Compound	AIM	1940–?
Kalkaringi	B???	1971–today
Katherine (Donkey Camp)	AIM	1941–today
Lajamanu (Hooker Creek)	B???	1962–today
Melville Island	RC(MSC)	1940–68

Milingimbi	MTH	1925–today
Newcastle Waters	AIM	1940s–72?
Numbulwar	CMS	1952–78
Oenpelli	CMS	1924–74
Palmerston	CMS	unknown
Papunya	L	1946–54
Phillip Creek	AIM	1936–51
Port Essington	RC	1846–49
Port Keats	RC	1935–today
Rapid Creek	RC(J)	1882–91
Retta Dixon Home (Darwin)	AIM	1946–80
Roper River	CMS	1908–68
Rose River (<i>see Numbulwar</i>)		
St Mary's Hostel (Alice Springs)	CE / AIM	1946–today
St Teresa	RC(MSC)	1954–today
Serpentine Lagoon	RC(J)	1889–91
Tennant Creek	RC	1936–today
Umbakumba (Groote Eylandt)	CMS	1958–66
Uniya	RC(J)	1886–99
Warrabri (Ali Curung)	BAP	1957–today
Yirrkala	MTH	1935–today
Yuendumu	BAP	1947–today

Source: *Lookin for Your Mob: A Guide to Tracing Aboriginal Family Trees*, by Diane Smith and Boronia Halstead, Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1990. Although this list is not complete, it includes the most relevant reserves and missions for family history research.

More information

- Records of some churches with missions in the Northern Territory are held in the NT Archives Service and are listed in [Guide to archives relating to Aboriginal people](#) (pdf, 85kb). These include the personal records of missionaries and government workers.
- The National Archives of Australia also holds records relating to Aboriginal missions and reserves in the Northern Territory. See the chapter on [Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory](#) in their guide, *Commonwealth government records about the Northern Territory*.

Australian Capital Territory

There were no missions or reserves in the ACT.





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Church names, missions and abbreviations

AAEMB – Australian Aborigines Evangelical Mission Board

ABM – Australian Board of Mission

ADV – Seventh Day Adventists

AFA – Aborigines' Friends' Association

AIM – Aborigines Inland Mission

ANG – Anglican

AOG – Assembly of God

APC – Apostolic Church

BAP – Australian Baptist Missionary Society

BR – Brethren

CMS – Church Missionary Society

CC – Church of Christ

CE – Church of England

GOVT – Government-run

INTER – Interdenominational

L – Lutheran Church of Australia

LMS – London Missionary Society

MTH – Methodist Overseas Mission

MOR – Moravians

PRES – Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions

RC – Roman Catholic

RC(B) – Benedictine

RC(J) – Jesuit

RC(MSC) – Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

RC(P) – Pallotine

RC(PSM) – Pious Society of Missions

RC(T) – Trappists

SAL – Salvation Army

SPG – Society for the Propagation of the Gospel

UAM – United Aborigines Mission

UC – Uniting Church

WMS – Wesleyan Missionary Society

